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The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

NIC #6057-83  
23 August 1983

National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM: Maurice C. Ernst, NIO/Economics

SUBJECT: Long-Range Planning for the Intelligence Community--  
A General Comment

1. The current planning exercise for the Intelligence Community, like its predecessors, begins with a view of the next 10-15 years. This process--of projecting the international environment independently of the actual planning of intelligence resources and programs suffers from fundamental problems that even the best crystal ball can do little about.

2. Any attempt to draw a picture of the world 10 or 15 years into the future requires judgments on a great variety of trends and relationships.

- o Many of these judgments are so uncertain, that they can be considered moot--for example, it is a fair bet that there will be not only periods of food shortage in the 1990s, but also periods of food glut. Unfortunately, no one knows which will happen when.
- o Even where long-term trends are reasonably well established, their relevance to intelligence needs may not be at all apparent --for example, how would Western European "stagnation" affect the broad requirements for intelligence?
- o Many judgments may be unnecessary for intelligence purposes--what is the point of projecting a problem 10 or 15 years hence when it might take only, say, 3-5 years to build up an intelligence capability to deal with it?
- o Finally, the judgments tend to be indiscriminate--that is, they do not clearly distinguish between those problems that are critical to a major intelligence function (such as monitoring of Soviet missile tests) and those which have little or no intelligence significance.

3. Problems such as these can lead to a good bit of confusion and wheel-spinning, and to a tendency to pay too much attention to minor issues and too little to major ones. In the final analysis, the exercise becomes

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largely academic--no one would bet money on most of the judgments it contains.

#### An Alternative Approach

4. An alternative approach would limit the number and types of judgments about the future to those which are necessary to plan the use of intelligence resources. The following steps would be involved:

- (1) Define intelligence objectives. Presumably, the fundamental objective is to avoid getting caught short; in other words:
  - o Maintaining or enhancing the capability for providing warning of threats to the national security;
  - o Maintaining or enhancing the capability to support policy concerns in areas where intelligence is expected to play a role.
- (2) Define the role of intelligence on major issues--whether primary or supplementary; continuing, occasional, or residual (for example, monitoring Soviet military capabilities is a primary role, but assessing free world crops or weather is a supplementary role).
- (3) Identify intelligence instruments (or resources) used to achieve objectives--specifically, manpower (numbers and training), money, and technology.
- (4) Specify the constraints (in particular, the time constraints) on the use and development of these resources. For example, it may take less than one year to shift manpower from one group of African countries to another; three to five years to substantially expand an analytical account, or build a new one from scratch; one to five years to train employees to master foreign languages, analytical or collection techniques; ten years or longer to develop new overhead collection systems.
- (5) Assess possible international trends that are relevant to different classes of resource issues (for example, with time horizons ranging from one year to over a decade).
  - o This approach would minimize the number of largely gratuitous judgments and would enable the Community to focus on the big ticket, megabuck programs that do indeed require a long-term perspective.

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doubt that trends in communications technology should be analyzed in great depth in order to avoid high risks of a deterioration of the COMINT effort and to enable CIA communications to keep up with the state of the art. Indeed, some of the best talent available needs to be mobilized to examine critical areas such as these adequately.

- o With regard to global non-military issues, on which intelligence has a unique and established role, such as energy, the high probability but highly uncertain timing of shortages and supply interruptions at some time in the next 10-15 years, suggest a need both to maintain a substantial capability and to provide a base for rapid expansion of capabilities when trends become clearer.
- o With regard to problems of political stability in LDCs, the uncertainties are great. There should be emphasis on developing a capability to mobilize expertise and resources quickly.



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